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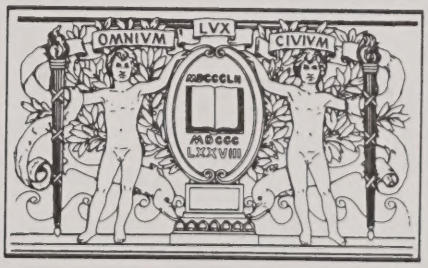

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NEW DIRECTIONS IN ROXBURY

A reading of newly available socio-economic information, and the trends which they reflect, reveal a notable improvement in the quality of life and neighborhood conditions in Roxbury, and a significant narrowing of the gap in comparison with the city as a whole. Roxbury median family income advanced more rapidly, 1979-84, than both that of Boston and the nation as a whole, reversing the 1969-79 decade of falling behind. Housing values also rose at a faster rate, 1975-84, than those for Boston as a whole, reducing the spread in relation to citywide averages. And the condition of housing in Roxbury made very significant progress, over the 1974-84 decade, with a rate of betterment exceeding that for Boston as a whole. Despite these advances, however, Roxbury, in 1984, lagged far behind Boston citywide income levels, housing values, and housing conditions.

These important indexes of "catch-up" in Roxbury (income 1979-84, housing values 1975-84, and housing conditions 1974-84) contrast markedly with the earlier experience of deterioration in the quality of life. Roxbury income levels had fallen behind in the 1969-79 decade. Housing values trailed in the 1955-75 era of citywide slow growth. And housing in Roxbury, in 1974, contained a much smaller share of "very good" and "good" condition, and a much larger proportion classified as "fair," "poor" and "very poor."

The shift in Roxbury's fortune in both periods responded to broader overriding citywide trends in population and jobs, and tax policy. Job expansion (since 1976), population growth (since 1980), and lower taxes (since 1981) and fairer taxes (since 1983) enhance the potential for

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RECENT SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHANGES IN ROXBURY AND IN BOSTON AS A WHOLE

			Roxbury	Boston	Roxbury As a Percent Of Boston	United States
Median Family Income						
1969			$ 6,582	$ 9,133	72%	$ 8,389
1979			10,773	16,062	67%	16,461
1984			15,312	21,186	72%	22,839
Change 1969-79			+ 64%	+ 75%	85%	+ 96%
1979-84			+ 42%	+ 32%	131%	+ 36%
Average Housing Values						
2-Family Homes						
Ward 8	1975	(City Hospital)	$ 9,343	$24,793	38%	
	1984		37,339	86,374	43%	
Change 1975-84			+ 300%	+ 248%		
Ward 9	1975	(Madison Park)	$15,074		61%	
	1984		53,393		62%	
Change 1975-84			+ 254%			
Ward 10	1975	(Parker Hill)	$19,344		78%	
	1984		82,075		95%	
Change 1975-84			+ 324%			
Ward 11	1975	(Egleston Square)	$14,537		59%	
	1984		63,868		74%	
Change 1975-84			+ 339%			
Ward 12	1975	(Washington Park)	$14,465		58%	
	1984		38,996		45%	
Change 1975-84			+ 170%			
Housing Condition Survey (Percent Composition)						
1974	A	Very Good	16%	70%	67%	
	B	Good	31%			
	C	Fair--Needs Repair	30%			
	D	Poor	13%	30%	157%	
	E	Very Poor--Unsound	4%			
1984/85	A		13%	36%	91%	
	B		71%	56%		
	C		9%	5%		
	D		7%	2%	216%	
	E		0.4%	0.5%		

Sources:

Median Family Income

1969 & 1979 - Margaret C. O'Brien, Boston Redevelopment Authority, Diversity and Change in Boston's Neighborhoods, 1970-1980, 1985

1984 - Boston Redevelopment Authority, "A Survey of Boston's Households, by Neighborhood," preliminary draft tables, 1985.

United States Median Family Income

1969, 1979 (& 1983) - U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Consumer Income, (Series P-60, No. 146), Money Income of Households, Families, and Persons in the United States: 1983, 1985

1984 - "State Personal Income, 1982-84; Revised Estimates," U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Survey of Current Business, August 1985. Median Family Income, 1984, estimated on the basis of per capita personal income 1983-84.

Average Housing Values

1975 - John Avault, Boston Redevelopment Authority, Tax Constraint and Fiscal Policy: After the Property Tax, Vol. II, Chapter 3, 1983.

1984 - County Comps Plus Report, Framingham, Massachusetts, 1985

Housing Condition Survey

1974 - "BRA/Building Inspection Department Housing Condition Survey, 1974," Boston Redevelopment Authority, Housing in Boston: Background Analysis and Program Directions, June 1974.

1984/85 - Jacob Schaffer, Boston Redevelopment Authority, "Summary Analysis of the Neighborhood Development and Employment Agency Housing Condition Survey, 1984/1985, with Comparisons with the 1974 BRA/Building Inspection Department Survey," Draft Table C.

important new advances in Roxbury's quality of life through private development, public policy, and community participation.

The very positive present-and-future horizon represents a fundamental change from that of the 1970s, when the impact of large public investment efforts in housing, schools and infrastructure was frustrated by adverse citywide trends in jobs, population and tax policy. Citywide job loss in the recessions of the early 1970s had wiped out much of Roxbury's manufacturing industry, and combined with suburbanization, led to Roxbury's 19 percent population loss 1970-80. Job decline and population outflow were exacerbated by tax assessments which did not reflect reduced value trends, and tax burdens which led to disincentives for home ownership and fix-up. The result was an emptying out of many Roxbury neighborhoods and tax-foreclosed and throw-away housing despite $125 million of public investment 1968-78.

Income

Median family income in Roxbury rose by 42 percent, 1979-84, in comparison with 32 percent for Boston as a whole, and 36 percent for the United States. (The median represents the middle family when all are arrayed by income size. With price levels increasing by 37 percent 1979-84, the growth in income levels reflected real gains for Roxbury.)

The more rapid growth of income in Roxbury in the last five years contrasted with the lag in the preceding decade. In the ten-year period 1969-79, Roxbury's median family income had increased by only 64 percent while that of Boston and the U.S. had risen by 75 percent and 96 percent, respectively. Since price levels had expanded by 88 percent,

1969-79, Roxbury's family income levels had fallen behind the rate of inflation.

Despite the more favorable trends of the last five years, family income levels in Roxbury, in 1984, were only 72 percent of that of the city as a whole, and 68 percent of that of the U.S.

Housing Values

The average value of two-family homes in Roxbury Wards 8 (City Hospital), 9 (Madison Park), 10 (Parker Hill), and 11 (Egleston Square) rose more rapidly in the 1975-84 period than that for the city as a whole. Most of this growth in value has occurred in the last five years--since 1979. (One and three-family homes experienced similar trends). The respective percentage increases for Wards 8, 9, 10, and 11, over this period, were 300 percent, 254 percent, 324 percent and 339 percent, in comparison with 248 percent for the city. Only Ward 12 (Washington Park) lagged behind in the rate of growth.

The more rapid growth in housing value in Roxbury 1975-84 contrasted with the experience of the 1955-75 period when Roxbury housing value growth was a small fraction of that for the city at a time when housing values overall were stagnant.

Even with the more rapid recent rise, however, the average value of two-family homes in Roxbury, in 1984, remained well below those for the city as a whole--43 percent of the citywide average in the case of Ward 8, 62 percent for Ward 9, 95 percent for Ward 10, 74 percent for Ward 11, and 45 percent for Ward 12. Ward 10 came closest, in 1984, with an average value of $82,075 for a two-family home, in comparison with $86,374 for those in the city as a whole.

Housing Condition

The 1974-84 increase in the share of housing classified as in "very good" or "good" condition in Roxbury was almost twice that in the city as a whole--37 percent for Roxbury in comparison with 22 percent for Boston as a whole. Roxbury's housing conditions had improved notably over the 1974-84 decade, with 47 percent classified as in "good" or "very good" condition in 1974, and 84 percent in 1984.

In the course of the 1974-84 decade, there had been a very broad improvement in the condition of Boston's housing. Substantial rehabilitation was aided by a flow of federal money, tax reduction and tax fairness, and, a rise in housing demand after 1978, following the post-1976 growth in jobs. In 1984, nevertheless, housing conditions in Roxbury were behind the citywide average of 92 percent in "good" and "very good" condition.

Alexander Ganz

October 7, 1985

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